(e) On 20th April, 2002 Sqn Ldr Khan and Fg Offr Dahiya were on a fighter maneuvering exercise. After the completion of the exercise, the pilot gave a call that he would be rejoining on his own but he did not. Subsequently, there was no radar contact with the aircraft.

The cause of the accident has not been established as yet. Depending upon the ground reports, the likely area of the crash has been identified. The Bhutanese Government has also been approached to render all possible assistance in locating the wreckage of the aircraft and the missing pilots. The IAF has so far carried out 168 sorties.

The search operations are still in progress to locate the crash site.

The U.S. Assistance in India's military needs

5110. SHRI YADLAPATI VENKAT RAO: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the U.S. is assisting in India's military needs; and

(b) if so, the details of the proposed sale by the U.S. to improve the security of the country?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) It would not be possible to give further details, in the interest of national security.

Joint Arms Manufacturing Partnership with South Africa

5111. SHRI K. KALAVENKATA RAO: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that South Africa has proposed a Joint Arms Manufacturing Partnership with India;

(b) if so, whether the proposal involves transfer of technology to India and export of manufactured arms to other countries; and

(c) if so, what is India's response to this offer?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) Yes, Sir. A South African public sector company has proposed a Joint Venture for cooperative efforts between South African and Indian Government Defence Production factories for artillery guns and related systems.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) It has been decided to discuss the proposal with the South African company.

Military exercises by Pakistan close to LOC in POK

5112. SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Pakistan have conducted Military Exercise in the month of March, 2002 close to the Line of Control in Pak occupied Kashmir;

(b) if so, whether Government of India was informed in advance about this;

(c) whether Government have lodged any protest with the Pakistan Government in this regard; and

(d) the other details in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) to (d) Pakistan Army conducted a two day brigade level exercise in the second week of March, 2002 in Kotli sector in Pakistan occupied Kashmir which is, 15—20 Km from the Line of Control.

As per the existing Agreement between India and Pakistan on Advance Notice on Military Exercise, no prior intimation is required for below Division level exercises.

Proposed strike by Civilian Employees of Ordance Factories

5113. SHRIMATI VANGA GEETHA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that civilian employees of Ordnance Factories propose to go on strike;